



## School of Design

### Research Application Criteria & Guidelines

A research proposal identifying the objectives and scope of the research and stages necessary for successful completion is a necessary and important part of your application. The proposal should indicate the nature of the outcome, for example whether it will be a full thesis, or a smaller thesis and body of creative work. In the case of practice-based research, applicants are advised to give an indication of the kind of creative work they intend to undertake, and how it will engage with and further the research aims and process.

The proposal may well later evolve and even change radically through the research process, but the initial proposal is required to help identify the particular research question(s) or areas of concern prompting this research and for staff to help identify suitable supervisory expertise if invited to interview.

Your research application has five components that enable you to identify the objectives and scope of your proposed research project and the stages necessary for its successful and timely completion:

1. Research Proposal (500-1,000 words approx.)
2. Qualifications and/or Relevant Professional Experience (300 words approx.)
3. Preparedness for Doctoral Project (300 words approx.)
4. Personal Statement (300 words approx.)
5. Assessment of your Supervision & Training Needs (300 words approx.)

For applicants wishing to undertake research by practice, a portfolio is additionally required to supplement component 3. Preparedness for Doctoral Project.

6. Portfolio (digital, online)

Please ensure that your application clearly addresses the criteria laid out below. Checklists are included as additional guidelines to enable you to address our selection criteria.

#### **1. Research Proposal (no more than 500 words approx.)**

We will assess your proposal against the following criteria:

- (a) AIMS: Identify a clear gap in existing knowledge.
- (b) CONTEXT: Demonstrate excellent knowledge of the field and preparedness to undertake the proposed research project.
- (c) METHODS: Your proposal must be original and innovative, substantively and/or methodologically.

- (d) IMPACT: The potential impact of the research must be explicit, with realistic and appropriate plans for maximising the impact identified (e.g. engaging possible non-academic partnerships.)
- (e) CLARITY: Writing and presentation must be of the highest standard.

Checklist:

*Context, methods and sources* must be well thought out and clearly expressed in your Research Proposal.

AIMS: Succinctly and clearly explain your aims and objectives. Identify a particular research question or area of concern prompting this research and convey its significance.

CONTEXT: Convey the intellectual, academic, creative context of the research question(s) or concerns. It is important to provide a bibliography of scholarly literature and other key research resources relevant to your proposal.

METHODS: Explain the research processes and methods that you will apply. Indicate why they are the most appropriate and, if relevant, most innovative methods.

IMPACT: Explain how your research will have academic and creative impact and/or social and economic impact.

CLARITY: Ensure that your proposal is succinct, clearly written and free of jargon (it should be readily understood by a non-expert). Ensure that you do not write more than the specified word limit.

## **2. Qualifications and/or Relevant Professional Experience (no more than 300 words approx.)**

Provide the following information (as is relevant):

- **ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS:** Identify all accredited higher education qualifications; provide classification of results. Where possible, place your results in context (e.g. *summa cum laude*; #2 in a cohort of 250, etc.) Ensure that you describe your qualifications in relation to either the SCQF (Scottish) or ECTS (European) qualification credit frameworks. If you are currently a student then provide your Semester 1 results in the form of an academic transcript or signed and stamped academic reference.
- **RELEVANT PRIZES & AWARDS:** Identify all prizes and awards. Again, please place these in context. (e.g. international award, local bursary, etc.) Do not include *irrelevant* prizes or awards.
- **RELEVANT PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:** Please contextualise this in relation to your proposed research. Provide strong evidence of independent research thinking and of high quality research outputs (Publications, Exhibitions etc) . Do not include *irrelevant* work experience.

## **3. Preparedness for Doctoral Project (no more than 300 words approx.)**

Building on the previous section, evidence how you are prepared to undertake your proposed research project, in at least one of the following areas:

- (a) Previous study
- (b) Relevant professional experience
- (c) Professional development

#### **4. Personal Statement (no more than 300 words approx.)**

Your personal statement must demonstrate awareness of the benefits, expectations and potential for engagement with the considerable research resources of:

- (a) The School of Design (wherein you will be based)
- (b) Edinburgh College of Art, The University of Edinburgh
- (c) The Scottish Graduate School for the Arts & Humanities (SGSAH [www.sgsah.ac.uk](http://www.sgsah.ac.uk))
- (d) Our relevant non-academic partners and supporters
- (e) Other appropriate research resources in or beyond Scotland.

NB: The Personal Statement *is not* an autobiography.

#### **5. Assessment of your Supervision & Training Needs (no more than 300 words approx.)**

There are three components to this section, a) Self-Assessment b) Institutional Assessment c) Identification of Supervisory Team

a) Self-Assessment: All PhD students need training, it is an ongoing process. You must provide a frank and realistic account of the training you will need and the academic supervision you will require. If relevant, please explain if you require particular technical support (e.g. learning a language or communication skill, technical studio resources etc). If you have already completed a formal research training programme or pertinent technical training please mention this here.

b) Institutional Assessment: You must clearly address how *we* can provide *you* with the best possible support available in terms of research training and research opportunities by making reference to the most apposite resources and opportunities offered by:

- The University of Edinburgh and its non-academic partners
- Our partners in The Scottish Graduate School for the Arts & Humanities consortium and its non-academic supporters (SGSAH [www.sgsah.ac.uk](http://www.sgsah.ac.uk))
- Other training resources or opportunities specific or unique to Scotland.

Checklist:

Investigate the resources of UoE and the SGSAH to determine how your proposal fits with and contributes to relevant:

- Academic Staff research expertise
- Strategic research themes (3 years +)
- Research Groups
- Research Centres
- Non-academic partnerships, outreach programmes and knowledge exchanges (particularly relevant to the impact of your research)

b) Identification of Supervisory Team: We expect you to *at least* identify who you would wish to be your Principal Supervisor in the School of Design and have an idea of a further two appropriate supervisors who are academic members of staff in either The University of Edinburgh or one of its academic partners in the Scottish Graduate School for the Arts & Humanities. <http://www.eca.ed.ac.uk/people?search-keyword=&search-options=207&more-search-options=All&school=4>

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## **6. Portfolio (research by practice PhDs only)**

If you wish to undertake research by practice, please also provide examples of your work. Applicants cannot be fully considered until an adequate portfolio has been received.

We expect the portfolio to be digital and available online either in the form of your own website/blog or as a downloadable PDF file stored in the cloud.

The URL of the portfolio must be included in the *3. Preparedness for Doctoral Project* section of your application.

The portfolio will indicate the research values and methods of your work to date, and should engage with and further the ideas outlined in your Research Proposal. It will support your *Preparedness for Doctoral Project* statement by providing strong corroborating evidence of independent research thinking and of high quality research output. Since it is a professional resource, the portfolio may also provide corroborating evidence of your professional experience.

**Applicants are advised to contact the ECA Postgraduate Office**  
[ecaresearchdegrees@ed.ac.uk](mailto:ecaresearchdegrees@ed.ac.uk) **if they have any queries relating to research degrees prior to application.**